DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 927 UD 024 292

AUTHOR	Mann, Dale
TITLE	Report of the National Invitational Working Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts (New York, New York, February 13-15, 1985).
INSTITUTION	Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. Teachers College.
SPONS AGENCY	American Can Co. Foundation, Greenwich, CT.
PUB DATE	13 Mar 85
NOTE	55p.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrator Role; Conferences; *Disadvantaged Youth; Dropout Characteristics; *Dropout Prevention; Dropout Programs; *Dropout Research; *High Risk Students; *Information Needs; Potential Dropouts; Program Improvement; Public Policy; Public Schools; Research Problems; School Districts; *School Holding Power; Secondary Education; Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

The conference summarized here brought together participants from 12 public school districts and 34 observers from government agencies, foundations and community organizations. The attendees addressed the concern that the reform agenda of American public schooling is insufficiently sensitive to needy children who have dropped out of school or who may be at risk of doing so. The chairman's personal observations of the conferencees' conclusions are provided on the following subjects: (1) the need for obtaining better data; (2) reasons for the absence of more accurate information; (3) improving the information base; (4) holding power in schools vs. post-school remediation; (5) "successful" programming; (6) the Comprehensive Competencies Program; (7) outcomes; (8) obstacles; and (9) who is to blame for the existing problems. The first appendix lists the guests at the conference, while a second provides the agenda. Appendix 3 plots program variables by district (the 12 districts represented at the conference), in terms of policy and services for dropouts or potential dropouts. Categories reviewed include: (1) diagnosis for student selection; (2) program learning content; (3) program delivery; (4) resources; and (5) evaluation. Appendix 4 addresses population characteristics, graduation requirements, degree options, and information management practices of individual districts. The paper "Uncommon Sense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts," by Edward L. McDill, Gary Natriello, and Aaron M. Pallas, is also appended to the report. (RDN)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED257927

Report of the National Invitational Working Conference on Holding Power and Drop-outs

sponsored by the American Can Company Foundation

Dale Mann, Professor and Chairman
Department of Educational Administration
Teachers College, Columbia University

CG024292

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

March 13, 1985

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D. Mann
Columbia Univ., N.Y.
Teachers College
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

Report

Background 2

Conference Procedures 3

Preliminary and Personal Observations 5

On Better Data 5

Why We Don't Have More Accurate Information 7

Improving the Information Base 7

Holding Power in Schools vs. Post-School Remediation . . . 8

On "Successful" Programming 9

On the "Comprehensive Competencies Program" (CCP) 10

On Outcomes 11

On Obstacles 11

On Who's To Blame 12

Appendices

1. Guest List 13

2. Agenda 16

3. Program Variables by District 19

4. Policy Variables by District. 21

5. "Uncommon Sense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts", McDill, Natriello, Pallas . . 32

Executive Summary

In mid-February 1985, the American Can Company Foundation sponsored a national invitational conference on drop-outs and holding power at Teachers College, Columbia University. Most of the dozen participating districts were places where the Company has a significant community interest: a score of foundations, government agencies, and advocacy groups observed the proceedings and contributed to this work. Each participating district contributed information about their drop-out situation and about programs aimed at the area. That information was complied and compared in a "Sourcebook" circulated at the conference which also included a set of draft recommendations.

Two and a half days of candid and thoughtful discussion suggest several conclusions. First, there is a serious if widely varying need to help young people who are increasingly at risk as policy attention has turned away from equity. While the conferees were unanimous in their concern, that commitment is not widely shared among other decision makers. One conclusion then is a need for advocacy and the base on which it can be built.

Despite the sincerity of the conferees, the chaotic nature of the field was clear. No one trusts the numbers that report drop-out rates. Definitions and local practice vary widely. Almost anything that improves schooling can be related to drop-outs but information on program effects (for example, increases in high school holding power, fewer children retained in grade, etc.) is very rare. Without accurate information on the incidence of dropping out or the efficacy of prevention or remediation programs, systematic program improvement is hard to achieve. This does not mean that the participating districts are not trying or that they did not present an array of often intriguing approaches. Rather, the point is we are not in a position even to ask, let alone answer the question, "What works?".

Better practice quite probably lies in the direction of (1) pupil progress measurement systems, (2) targetted services on children known to be at risk, (3) small programs with lots of care, concern (and probably computers), (4) a linkage between learning and earning, and (5) a focus on techniques proven to be successful at basic skills acquisition, i.e., mastery learning or the ideas captured in the movement for instructionally effective schooling.

The experience of both the public school participants and the observer group demonstrated a high level of concern for drop-outs and a potential basis for future action in support of improved school holding power.

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

Report of the NATIONAL INVITATIONAL WORKING CONFERENCE ON HOLDING POWER AND DROP-OUTS

February 13-15, 1985

Sponsored by the American Can Company Foundation

Background

In mid-February, 1985, the American Can Company Foundation sponsored a national invitational conference on drop-outs and holding power at Teachers College, Columbia University. The conference brought together participants from 12 public school districts* and 34 observers from government agencies, foundations, and community organizations (see Guest List, Appendix A). The conference was prompted by a concern among the Foundation's leaders that the reform agenda of American public schooling was not sufficiently sensitive to the most needy children and youth, particularly those who have dropped out of school or who may be at risk of doing so.

Most of the participating districts were places where American Can has a significant community interest. While a few districts

---

* Atlanta, GA
Boston, MA
Cleveland, OH
Fort Worth, TX
Houston, TX
Jacksonville, FL
Menasha, WI
Neenah, WI
Newark, NY
St. Cloud, MN
St. Louis, MO
St. Paul, MN

were chosen because of their exemplary drop-out related activities, the range of participants and the selection procedure serendipitously provided a look at a rough cross-section of school practices and problems in this area. Also serendipitously, the large size and diverse composition of the observer group suggests something of the deep concern about youth at educational risk in America.

The conference had three purposes: (1) to exchange information among the participating districts about practices and problems; (2) to determine the level of continuing interest in the area; and (3) to direct attention to school holding power and drop-outs.

Conference Procedures

The primary dynamic of the conference was a sequence of brief and informal presentations, each led by district personnel, about, for example, pupil progress measurement systems or early identification practices (see Appendix 2, "Agenda"). The observer group was periodically asked for comments and observations.

To facilitate the conference itself, each district was asked to participate in a preliminary data collection and analysis effort. Districts forwarded summary descriptions of their most important drop-out related efforts. A program analysis taxonomy was constructed through content analysis of each program and from theoretical frameworks that are commonly used to research curriculum programs and their effects. Appendix 3, "Program Variables By District," compares the programs submitted by each of the participating districts along the several dimensions of the taxonomy.

We also prepared a comparative analysis of the background and outcome factors relevant to the holding power question, e.g., percents of student enrollment by racial and ethnic groups, kinds of diplomas awarded, size of place, information management practices, , etc. For each of the participating districts we recorded (a) attendance rate (range: from 82 to 95 percent) and drop-out rates (range: from 0.8 to 16 percent). See Appendix 4, "Policy Variables by District."

Finally, I prepared a rough and preliminary set of draft recommendations, mainly aimed at national policy options, based partly on the initial responses from the districts.

These three analyses (the program comparisons, the policy variable comparisons, and draft recommendations) were compiled in an advance, "Sourcebook" and used to support the work of the conference by focusing participant attention prior to the meeting, and by providing a common data base should that be needed for the participants' deliberations. In fact, the conferees' interest and task orientation was so high that only occasional use has been made so far of the "Sourcebook." It should also be mentioned that the participants were profoundly skeptical of their own data and indicators (especially, reported rates of early school leaving). Nonetheless, the data contained in the "Sourcebook" are the base for continuing analysis by two of the conference staff (John Clifford, "Critical Analysis of Drop-Out Prevention Program Variables in Selected School Districts," in progress; and, George Morrow, "Standardization of a Data Base for Analysing School Drop-Outs", in progress; both, Teachers College, Columbia University.)

Our activities had the benefit of opening remarks by Professor

Gary Natriello of Teachers College, Columbia University dealing with drop-outs in the context of the national reforms (See Appendix 5, Edward McDill, Gary Natriello, Aaron Pallas, "Uncommonsense: School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts," New York, Teachers College, February 1985) and Professor Gary Wehlage of the University of Wisconsin speaking about within-school factors that can be changed to increase holding power.

The group visited a drop-out remediation program directed by Virginia Kwarta of the Bank Street College faculty and operating in quarters provided by Junior High School 54 in Manhattan. That program's curriculum is built on the Comprehensive Competencies Program developed by Robert Taggart of the Remediation Training Institute. After reviewing the field operation of the program, Gordon Berlin of the Urban Poverty group at the Ford Foundation discussed the links that should now be forged among basic skills acquisition, employment training, and public school programs.

Preliminary and Personal Observations

The following remarks are my own thoughts about some of the most important issues from the conference's work. They are subject to revision and refinement, hopefully from participants and observers whose expertise defines this field.

On Better Data

Although everyone agreed about the gravity of the data problem, enthusiasm for solving it was very constrained. Drop-out figures are notoriously wobbly: few trust even their own, and districts have several different rates depending on procedures and

assumptions. Drop-out figures are easy to misunderstand and easier to calumnify. Still, the wild variation in the numbers reported makes it impossible even to ask the "What works?" question. Without ways to measure success we cannot improve practice. The private sector calls this "the bottom line;" academics call it "the dependent variable"; leaders call it "results." By whatever name the (public school) drop-out area has no data linking programs to outcomes. One consequence is that, without better data, no one can argue the case for more attention to this area. The point is especially acute with respect to Hispanic youth and other ethnic and/or linguistic minorities. Improvement, accountability, and resource generation could all benefit from developing a standard data set.

Two areas serving children and youth have made remarkable progress in part because common definitions of outcomes have illuminated the process of improvement. The addition of "positive terminations" in youth employment/training programs (e.g., enrollees who graduate, find, and keep jobs) and standardized reading and math achievement scores in elementary education have both helped refine programs by linking inputs to client outcomes. The measures are controversial and have unintended outcomes but the difference that the absence of comparable measures makes is noticeable in the drop-out area.

Better data collection practice will require regularizing (a) what constitutes a drop-out, (b) the population base from which attrition is measured, and (c) the time period for the measurement. Jacksonville, Florida has a good pupil progress measurement system and is a possible base for a shared model.

Why We Don't Have More Accurate Information

The barriers to better data are formidable. Understanding them helps explain why we do not have better information and the kind of work that will be necessary to improve the area.

No Demands and No Rewards Some advocacy groups assert that rates of early school leaving are unacceptably high. But those groups cannot force solutions and the confused nature of the field (see below) fosters unresponsiveness. If there is not much push, there is no pull at all. Categorical programs do not target these youth (while they are in school) and there are no fiscal rewards to organizations that succeed. From the standpoint of an administrative career, the area is so risky as to be a disincentive.

Multiple Causes The standard etiology of early school leaving lists school failure, family problems, economic opportunity and/or necessity, and health as contributing factors. Schools are justifiably reluctant to be responsible for the three of the four factors on that list that they cannot influence. Thus, the multiplicity of causes can sabotage the best in-school efforts.

Multiple Amelioratives When pressed to respond, schools can always point to lists of activities all of which can be plausibly linked to the area. Needy kids deserve a range of help and complex problems deserve complex attention. But the range of services makes targeting clients, measuring outcomes, and encouraging accountability extremely difficult.

Improving the Information Base

We should regularize: (a) what constitutes a "drop-out"; (b)

the population base from which attrition is measured; (c) the time periods for measurement; (d) the descriptions of youth at risk; and (e) the descriptions of the programs or interventions applied to those young people.

The distance between those goals and current practice can be measured by trying to make generalizations from the information provided in Appendices 3 and 4. Getting districts to agree on common procedures, to use those procedures, and to allow their experiences to be compared cannot be done without the active and continuous participation of district personnel in some sort of collaborative but coordinated activity. Said another way, the central invention of a better data system, without the active involvement of those people who must use it, simply will not work.

Holding Power in Schools vs. Post-School Remediation

The conferees devoted more attention and seemed to have more confidence in in-school prevention programs than in programs aimed at youth who had dropped out. That may be because participants were drawn from the ranks of public schooling but it is also a signal of what public school people do best and can influence. (Note: the relative de-emphasis of remediation programs for those who have dropped out yields a partial picture of the area. There are many other activities that work through youth-serving, but non-school agencies, especially Cities-In-Schools.)

Doing better on the in-school activities will require tighter definitions, better proof, and more work with districts in getting more accurate data about programs than was possible in preparation for this conference.

Virtually anything that improves schools also helps kids who may drop-out. The fact that every district has something to report that can be classified this way disguises the reality that only a handful of activities are targeted directly on holding power. The area is a dilemma. For example, targeted programs direct some help to the neediest youth but also fall short of the sort of wholesale, holistic reform that was eloquently argued by several conferees. Some districts regretted that their targeted programs were unlikely to touch the core problems of either the kids or the institutions. Such programs also assume that the core of secondary education is sound. Another important comment was, "We've got one of every possible type of program and we still have the same or worse drop-out problem that everyone else has. We shouldn't stop the programs but we ought to pay more attention to what we are doing, especially to differences among individuals."

On "Successful" Programming

Hi-tech/Hi-touch seems clearly in order. Drop-out programs that work seem to bracket those poles. They had lots of care and concern (assisted by being small scale) and they had computers as tools for learning and for managing teaching. Computers also increased practice time and that resulted in strong basic skills gains. (Higher order skills are a different matter.)

That teachers should care overtly and consistently for youth was a common theme. Atlanta's "Community of Believers" extends the precept beyond the school. The place of caring was far more clear than how to get it where it does not now exist especially since many drop-out programs are not the most sought after teaching

assignments.

Gordon Berlin stressed the necessity of a connection between learning and earning. But public schools cannot (and probably should not) provide precise job-specific training. The more general education (e.g., work habits, learning how to learn, stocks of general knowledge) is exactly the curriculum that the drop-out has not done well.

On the "Comprehensive Competencies Program" (CCP)

The power of this program seemed consistently underestimated by conferees. Berlin argued that, if the problem is basic skills acquisition in an employment training environment, WE KNOW WHAT WORKS. Berlin's convictions are based on federal multi-year, multi-source, mega-buck analyses of JTPA and its predecessors. The proven features are as follows.

Mastery learning (time to learn bite sized bits, frequently tested and reinforced).

Sequencing learning with learners sorted by appropriate developmental stages.

Peer support + care + concern: the "Hokey Factor" which is both hokey and necessary.

A learning/earning mix or link (neither schooling nor work is enough in isolation).

Links to subsequent paid employment, i.e., not job specific or even skill specific but a job waiting at the end of the learning.

Self paced.

Computer managed and augmented.

Berlin believes that the state of the knowledge base is so strong that it must override our usual Burger King approach to school reform ("... have it your way"). CCP programs are franchised with user agreements and standardized procedures. On the other hand, several observers were impressed with the way in which regulations and laws hamper program operations.

On Outcomes

Many programs dealing with at risk youth guarantee outcomes (and program survival) by creaming the applicant population, especially when they are required to meet performance standards like high rates of positive termination. One way to ameliorate the situation is to index performance standards to the input characteristics of learners and the difficulty or ambition of the program's objectives. Berlin argues that the greatest gains came from the neediest kids. Atlanta is now targetting some services on the bottom quartile of youth on standardized tests. They are put into a one-to-one partnership with 183 business persons who follow them throughout their school experience.

On Obstacles

Money never got much discussion and when it did the zero-sum proposition was rejected ("Helping poor kids does not come at the expense of middle income children and vice versa"). But at least two districts reported that school boards are not very supportive of resources for youth at this end of the community spectrum. High school teachers were widely regarded as part of the problem and it was suggested that we should find ways to encourage teachers to

exercise their natural feelings of concern for children. One consequence of teachers being overloaded and under pressure to raise scores is a triage decision in which they decide to "teach the best and to hell with the rest." Schools also continue to act on assumptions about the family and about work which are no longer true. All of that is likely to be difficult to address given the transitory nature of political agendas. Drop-outs may end up being not much more than this year's policy fad.

On Who's To Blame?

The conferees (and the observers) were very gentle about this. Various perspectives were expressed including that schools are not responsible for situations beyond their control (family problems, depressed economies) and, on the other hand, that schools are responsible for kids dropping out (schools suspend, fail, expel, etc.). No consistent position was achieved perhaps because both positions are partly correct. Some participants thought that school administrators should be "responsible" for reducing drop-outs but only a few would make them "accountable" for that (i.e., linking evaluation, promotion, reassignment to drop-out rates). No one trusts the data, the rates have causes beyond the school's reach, and programs themselves are thought to be not very effective. Thus, direct approaches to accountability or leadership did not get much support. Despite conferees' misgivings, the Texas legislature will add drop-out rates as part of a school principal's performance assessment by 1986.

GUEST LIST

Teachers College: DROP-OUT CONFERENCE
February 13th to 15th, 1985

ATLANTA, Georgia		
	Alonzo Crim	Superintendent
	Boyd Odom	Executive Director, Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education
BOSTON, Massachusettes		
	Jeannette Hargroves	Research and Community Affairs, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
CELVELAND, Ohio		
	Abba Schwartz	Director, Pupil Personnel
FORT WORTH, Texas		
	Lonnie Wagstaff	Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services
	Dan Powell	Director, Evaluation and Planning
HOUSTON, Texas		
	Margaret LeCompt	Executive Director, Program Evaluation
JACKSONVILLE, Florida		
	Don Roberson	Assistant Superintendent, Division of Administration and Instructional Auditing
	Lawanna Bell	Drop-out Recruiter
MENASHA, Wisconsin		
	John Stofflet	Superintendent
NEENAH, Wisconsin		
	George Grigsby	Superintendent
NEWARK, New York		
	Edward McHale	Superintendent
	Dennis Ford	Assistant Principal, Newark Junior High School
ST. CLOUD, Minnesota		
	Ronald Jandura	Superintendent
ST. LOUIS, Missouri		
	Jerome Jones	Superintendent
	Queen Fowler	Director, Pupil Personnel Services
ST. PAUL, Minnesota		
	Geraldine Kozberg	Assistant Director, Program and Staff Development

Appendix 1: Guest List

INVITED SPEAKERS (2/15/85)

Gordon Berlin	Program Officer Urban Poverty, Ford Foundation
Gary Natriello	Professor, Program for Entry into the Educating Professions, Teachers College, Columbia University
Gary Wehlage	Professor, Wisconsin Center for Education Research Wisconsin University

AMERICAN CAN COMPANY FOUNDATION

Peter Goldberg	Managing Director, American Can Company Foundation
Ray Reisler	Manager, Foundation Grants Program, American Can Company Foundation

INVITED OBSERVERS

Diane August	Program Associate, Carnegie Foundation
Adrienne Bailey	Vice President for Academic Affairs, The College Board
Lloyd Bishop	Chairman, Department of Organization & Administrative Studies, New York University
Beverly Cole	Education Director, NAACP of New York City
Lloyd Cook	Senior Advisor to the Chancellor, New York City Board of Education
Irwin Flaxman	Director, ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban and Minority Studies
Michelle Fine	Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania
Rene Gonzalez	Senior Research Specialist, NIE
Richard Halverson	Field Management Associates, New York City
Charles Harrington	Director, Institute for Urban and Minority Education Teachers College, Columbia University
Sandor Havran	New Jersey State Department of Education
Dennis Hernandez	Committee on Labor and Human Welfare, United States Senate

INVITED OBSERVERS (continued) (2/15/85)

Martin Hochbaum	American Jewish Congress, Intergroup Relations
Deborah Inman	Professor, Department of Organization & Administrative Studies, New York University
Virginia Kwarta	Director, Basic Skills Academy, Bank Street College of Education
Bob Lyke	Library of Congress
Richard Magat	Director, Hazen Foundation
Noe Medina	Education Coordinator, Children's Defense Fund
Dalton Miller-Jones	Associate Professor, Developmental Psychology Graduate School, City University of New York
James O'Connell	Dean, College of New Platz, SUNY
Roz Oratz	Director, Student Progress, New York City Board of Education
Lori Orum	Senior Education Policy Analyst, National Council of LA RAZA
Michael Redmond	Manpower Development Research Corporation
Frank Smith	Professor, Teachers College
Paul Sorenson	Special Assistant to the Chancellor, New York City Board of Education
Vivian Stewart	Program Director, Carnegie Foundation
Mercer Sullivan	Senior Research Associate, VERA Institute of Justice
P. Michael Timpane	President, Teachers College, Columbia University
Michael Webb	Associate Director, ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban and Minority Studies

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10027

CENTER FOR EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN ECONOMY
(212) 678-3050

AGENDA
(2/13/85)

NATIONAL INVITATIONAL WORKING CONFERENCE ON HOLDING POWER AND DROP-OUTS

sponsored by
The American Can Company Foundation

February 13-15, 1985 (Wednesday through Friday)

February 13, Wednesday (Room 1512, Kellogg Center, School of International Affairs, 420 West 118th Street Columbia University)

5:00 Reception

6:00 Dinner

7:00 Welcoming Remarks: Dale Mann, Teachers College, Columbia University
P. Michael Timpane, President, Teachers College, Columbia University

7:15 Gary Natriello, Teachers College, "Drop-Outs and the National Reform Agenda"

Gary Wehlage, University of Wisconsin, "Who's Dropping Out and What Should be Done"

February 14, Thursday (Grace Dodge Room, Teachers College, 525 West 120th Street)

8:15 Coffee

8:30 Dropouts: The Definitional, Statistical, Legal, and Policy Problems

Cleveland Abba Schwartz, Director, Pupil Personnel

10:30 Refreshments

AGENDA 2/13/85
Conference on Holding Power and Drop-Outs

Thursday Morning (continued)

10:45 Program Building Blocks

Teacher practices
Fort Worth — Lonnie Wagstaff, Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Services

Curriculum
Menasha — John Stofflet, Superintendent

Early identification and prevention
Neenah — George Grigsby, Superintendent
Jacksonville — Don Roberson, Assistant Superintendent Division of Administration and Instructional Auditing

Organizational and political-economic factors
Atlanta — Alonzo Crim, Superintendent
Newark — Edward McHale, Superintendent

12:00 Lunch

Faculty House, Harison Room
(2nd floor, 117th Street and Morningside Drive)

1:00 Visit to Basic Skills Academy (Booker T. Washington Junior High School, corner of Columbus Avenue and 107th Street. Use the 107th Street entrance, Room 302)

2:00 Gordon Berlin, Ford Foundation, "Lessons Learned From Youth Employment Training" (Reconvenes at Grace Dodge Room, Teachers College, 525 West 120th Street)

3:30 Refreshments

3:45 Program Implementation

School-based
St. Paul — Geraldine Kozberg, Assistant Director Program and Staff Development

Community-based
Atlanta — Boyd Odom, Executive Director, Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education
Fort Worth — Dan Powell, Director, Evaluation and Planning

Employment training-based
Houston — Jill Shaw, Cities in Schools
Newark — Dennis Ford, Assistant Principal

5:00 Adjourn (dinner on your own)

AGENDA 2/13/85
Conference on Holding Power and Drop-Outs

February 15, Friday (Grace Dodge Room, Teachers College, 525 West 120th Street)

8:15 Coffee

8:30 Showcasing of programs

Planning emphasis
Houston — Margaret LeCompt, Executive Director, Program Evaluation

Client emphasis
Jacksonville — Lawanna Bell, Drop-out Recruiter
St. Louis — Jerome Jones, Superintendent

Delivery emphasis
St. Cloud — Ron Jandura, Superintendent

10:30 Refreshments

10:45 Draft Recommendations: Discussion

12:00 Lunch

Faculty House, Harison Room
(2nd floor, 117th Street and Morningside Drive)

Remarks: Peter Goldberg, Managing Director, The American Can Company Foundation
P. Michael Timpane, President, Teachers College, Columbia University

1:00 Next Generation Program Design (Reconvenes at Grace Dodge Room, Teachers College, 525 West 120th Street)

3:00 Refreshments

3:15 Next Generation Program Design (continued)

5:00 Adjourn

PROGRAM VARIABLES BY DISTRICT

VARIABLES			ATLA	CLEV	FT.W	GR.R	HOUS	JACK	MENA	NEEN	NEWA	S.CL	S.LO	S.PA	TOTAL
OBJECTIVE(S)		Student Focus	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11
		Staff Focus				X	X	X							3
		Organizational Focus							X	X					2
		Other													0
DIAGNOSIS FOR STUDENT SELECTION	BACKGROUND DATA	SES	X			X	X			X		X	X	X	7
		Family Structure	X				X			X	X				4
		Ethnicity					X						X	X	3
		Sex				X				X			X		3
	IN SCHOOL PERFORMANCE	Under Achievement	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X			7
		Low Ability				X		X		X			X		4
		Behavior		X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	8
		Attendance	X			X	X	X		X	X		X		7
		Other	X			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	8
	OUT OF SCHOOL BEHAVIOR	Employment Status					X								1
		Pregnancy	X			X	X	X				X			5
		Police Encounters	X	X			X			X	X				5
		Chemical Abuse	X							X		X			3
		Other													0
PROGRAM LEARNING CONTENT	ACADEMIC	Enrichment	X	X		X	X		X	X		X	X	X	9
		Interdisciplinary													0
		Modified Academics					X				X		X		3
		Remediation	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	9
		Community Projects		X						X		X	X		4
	VOCATIONAL	Career Education		X		X	X		X				X	X	6
		Career Exploration	X			X	X			X		X		X	6
		Work/Study	X	X		X		X	X	X		X		X	9
		Vocational Training	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X			8
	GUIDANCE	Personal Growth	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	10
		Social Skills	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	9
		Life Skills				X	X	X	X			X	X	X	7
		Family Counseling				X	X	X	X	X		X			6

VARIABLES			ATLA	CLEV	FT.W	GR.R	HOUS	JACK	MENA	NEEN	NEWA	S.CL	S.LO	S.PA	TOTAL
PROGRAM DELIVERY	HOUSING	Mainstream		X		X			X	X					4
		Separate Room		X		X	X							X	4
		Alternative Facility	X				X			X	X	X	X	X	7
		Other													0
	SCHEDULING	Flexible Hours					X	X	X		X			X	5
		Summer/Evening				X			X	X				X	4
		Extended Day					X								1
		Other								X					1
	DURATION	Part Time				X	X		X	X					4
		Short Term									X		X	X	3
		Terminal	X				X		X	X		X		X	6
		Other	X												1
	FEATURES	Individualized Attention	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	10
		Frequent Feedback				X					X	X			3
		Low T/S Ratio				X	X				X	X	X	X	6
		Competency Based					X								1
		Learner Paced				X	X								2
		Computer Asst. Instr.													0
		Tutoring	X	X			X	X	X			X		X	7
		Other					X			X					2
RESOURCES	IN SCHOOL	Feeder School Articulation							X	X					2
		Circulation of Records						X	X				X		3
		Staff Training				X					X				2
		Support Team					X	X		X			X		4
		Ombudsman	X					X			X				3
		Other													0
	OUT OF SCHOOL	Youth Employment Trg.	X	X		X				X	X	X			6
		Comm. Network Liaison	X	X				X	X			X	X	X	7
		Social Svs. Liaison	X	X			X	X	X	X		X		X	8
		Juv. Justice Liaison	X	X			X			X		X	X	X	7
		Comm. Based Organ.	X									X	X	X	4
		Other	X	X		X	X		X		X	X		X	8
EVALUATION	FORMAL	Pre-Post Testing		X		X	X					X			4
		Control Group Compar.													0
		Annual Rate Comparison	X	X		X	X		X	X		X			7
		Other	X	X			X			X	X	X		X	7
	INFORMAL	Interviews					X								1
		Observations													0
		Surveys		X		X			X	X					4
		Other												X	1

ATLANTA, Georgia
1984-85 Enrollment: 67,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

0.5	Asian
91	Black
0.5	Hispanic
-	Native American
8	White

56	8th graders reading below grade level
( )	Served in special education
( )	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
( )	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 21
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: ( )

Diplomas accepted: ( )

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 5.2% Attendance rate: 93%
1975 Drop-out rate: ( )
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA, first 20 days for the first 4 months of school

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
basic computer storage
demographics / attendance / grades

( ) missing data

CLEVELAND, Ohio
1984-85 Enrollment: 75,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

1	Asian
68	Black
4	Hispanic
1	Native American
26	White
16	8th graders reading below grade level
6	Served in special education
3	Served in English as a Second Language
52	Living in single parent homes
76	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 18
Compulsory school age: 6 to 18

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Evening High School
General Educational Development (GED)

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Evening High School

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 4.4% Attendance rate: 79.9%
1975 Drop-out rate: 3.1%
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: K-12 grades
Method of computation: both straight percent and cohort survival

Student tally: ADM based on attendance during 1st week in October

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
computer data base
demographics / attendance /
grades / discipline history

OTHER

Longitudinal study of students (future)

( ) missing data

FORT WORTH, Texas
1984-85 Enrollment: 60,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

2	Asian
36	Black
21	Hispanic
-	Native American
41	White

( )	8th graders reading below grade level
13	Served in special education
10	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
40	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 21
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular

Diplomas accepted: Regular

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 16% Attendance rate: ( )
1975 Drop-out rate: ( )
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: averaged 7th to 12th grades
Method of computation: cohort survival

Student tally: ADA, highest count during a 4 week period in October or March

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
computer data base
demographics / attendance / grades
test scores

( ) missing data

HOUSTON, Texas
1984-85 Enrollment: 175,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

3	Asian
44	Black
34	Hispanic
-	Native American
19	White
38	8th graders reading below grade level
9	Served in special education
7	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
44	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 21
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Genral Educational Development (GED)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 5.4% Attendance rate: 95%
1975 Drop-out rate: ( )
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grade
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA, highest count during a 4 week period in October or March

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
computer data base
demographics

( ) missing data

JACKSONVILLE, Florida
1984-85 Enrollment: 98,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

1.9	Asian
36	Black
1	Hispanic
0.1	Native American
61	White
22	8th graders reading below grade level
15	Served in special education
0.4	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
31	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 24
Compulsory school age: 6 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Special Education
Certificate of Completion
Competence Development Certification

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Special Education
General Educational Development (GED)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 4.7% Attendance rate: ( )
1975 Drop-out rate: 5.6%
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: 7th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA for two 10 day periods, half of state aid given for each tally; converted into Fulltime Equivalents

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders
integrated computer data base
attendance / test scores /
grades / discipline infractions

OTHER

Comprehensive Conduct Code - computerized
Generate student profiles: national merit scholars,
Class 3 offenders, Chapter I students, academically strong blacks

( ) missing data

MENASHA, Wisconsin
1984-85 Enrollment: 3,100

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

2	Asian
0.5	Black
1.5	Hispanic
2	Native American
94	White
9	8th graders reading below grade level
10	Served in special education
1	Served in English as a Second Language
30	Living in single parent homes
9	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 13 1/2
Compulsory school age: 6 to 18

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
General Educational Development (GED)

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Evening High School
General Educational Development (GED)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 1.9% Attendance rate: 99%
1975 Drop-out rate: 7.5%
1965 Drop-out rate: 7%

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA, average of 3rd Friday in September and 2nd Friday in January

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)

( ) missing data

NEENAH, Wisconsin
1984-85 Enrollment: 5,600

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

1	Asian
-	Black
-	Hispanic
-	Native American
98	White
27	8th graders reading below grade level
11	Served in special education
1	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
12	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 13 1/2
Compulsory school age: 6 to 18

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Special Education Diploma
General Educational Development (GED)

Diplomas accepted: All valid diplomas and certificates

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 3.1% Attendance rate: 90%
1975 Drop-out rate: 1.1%
1965 Drop-out rate: 0.5%

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA, average of 3rd Friday in September and 2nd Friday in January

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)

( ) missing data

NEWARK, New York
1984-85 Enrollment: 3,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

-	Asian
3	Black
5	Hispanic
-	Native American
92	White

18	8th graders reading below grade level
14	Served in special education
1	Served in English as a Second Language
45	Living in single parent homes
10	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 18 1/2
Compulsory school age: 6 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regents
Regular
General Educational Development (GED)

Diplomas accepted: Regents
Regular

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 9% Attendance rate: 95.6%
1975 Drop-out rate: 9%
1965 Drop-out rate: 9%

Baseline population: 9th to 12th graders
Method of computation: cohort survival

Student tally: ADA

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
basic computer storage
demographics / attendance / grades

( ) missing data

ST. CLOUD, Minnesota
1984-85 Enrollment: 9,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

1	Asian
0.5	Black
-	Hispanic
0.5	Native American
98	White
17	8th graders reading below grade level
5	Served in special education
1	Served in English as a Second Language
20	Living in single parent homes
17	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 20
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Evening High School
General Educational Development (GED)
Certificate of Attendance

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Evening High School
General Educational Development (GED)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 0.8% Attendance rate: 95%
1975 Drop-out rate: 6%
1965 Drop-out rate: 10%

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADM, running tally of enrolled students throughout the year

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
basic computer storage
demographics / attendance / grades

( ) missing data

ST. LOUIS, Missouri
1984-85 Enrollment: 50,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

.7	Asian
77.7	Black
-	Hispanic
21.0	Native American
-	White

( )	8th graders reading below grade level
13	Served in special education
7	Served in English as a Second Language
( )	Living in single parent homes
65	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 22
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Evening High School
Vocational Education Diploma
General Educational Development (GED)
Diploma of Attendance

Diplomas accepted: Regular
Evening High School
General Educational Development (GED)

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 15% Attendance rate: ( )
1975 Drop-out rate: 13.8%
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: 9th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADA

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
computer data base
demographics / attendance /
grades / suspensions / test scores

( ) missing data

ST. PAUL, Minnesota
1984-85 Enrollment: 31,000

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS (shown as percents)

11	Asian
14	Black
6	Hispanic
2	Native American
67	White
59	8th graders reading below grade level
3.9	Served in special education
10	Served in English as a Second Language
30	Living in single parent homes
43	Living below poverty level

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Years of academic subject area instruction required by state: 20
Compulsory school age: 7 to 16

DEGREE OPTIONS

Diplomas awarded: Regular
Special Educaion Certificate
General Educational Development (GED)

Diplomas accepted: Regular

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: Related to Drop-Outs

1983-84 Drop-out rate: 7.6% Attendance rate: 91.2
1975 Drop-out rate: ( )
1965 Drop-out rate: ( )

Baseline population: 7th to 12th grades
Method of computation: straight percent = $\frac{\text{\# of drop-outs}}{\text{baseline population}}$

Student tally: ADM, running tally of enrolled students throughout the year

Routine method of storing data: cumulative folders (paper)
computer data base
demographics / attendance / grades

( ) missing data

Uncommon Sense:
School Administrators, School Reform and Potential Dropouts*

Edward L. McDill
Johns Hopkins University

Gary Natriello
Teachers College
Columbia University

Aaron M. Pallas
Johns Hopkins University

February 1985

*Paper prepared for presentation at the National Invitational Conference on Holding Power and Dropouts, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Uncommon Sense:
School Administrators, School Reform, and Potential Dropouts

The current national movement for educational reform presents school leaders with cause for both celebration and caution. Education is finally back in the forefront of policy discussions at the state and national levels, and educators have an opportunity and a responsibility to make use of the moment to secure increased support for American schools. However, as with all widespread movements, the current reform effort has its own direction and momentum, and while directing attention to certain problems in the schools, it may divert much needed attention from problems that are equally pressing.

One problem in the second category is that of the vast numbers of students who fail to graduate from high school in the United States. In this paper we will, first, argue that the dropout problem in American schools is severe and deserving of attention. Second, we will note the nearly complete failure of the current reform movement to attend to the dropout problem. Third, we will consider the potential positive and negative effects of the reforms on the dropout problem. Finally, we will present a series of practical suggestions for school administrators who must continue to deal with the dropout problem in the context of reforms that may both ignore and aggravate the problem. Our position is that in addressing the problems of "A Nation at Risk" we must not overlook the problems for a "population at risk", potential dropouts from school.

The Severity and Nature of the Dropout Problem

There is no shortage of evidence to suggest that the failure of many students to complete high school is a serious social problem. Nearly one-third of respondents in a national survey of school administrators cited

early dropouts as a problem in their school district. In this same survey over one-half of the administrators in districts with more than 25,000 students reported that early dropouts are a problem. These same administrators complained of the permanent intellectual and/or vocational damage to the dropouts and of the overall lowering of school standards and achievement as negative results of the dropout problem (Neill, 1979).

The dropout problem also has long term economic consequences. While the economic costs of dropping out are difficult to estimate, in 1972 Levin projected the costs for lost tax revenue from high school dropouts ages 25-34 at $71 billion, welfare and unemployment costs at $3 billion, and crime and crime prevention costs at $3 billion (Levin, 1972). Translating these conservative 1972 estimates into 1985 dollars suggests that solving the dropout problem would go a long way toward alleviating the national debt.

While reliable statistics on school attendance are difficult to obtain, it is estimated that approximately 25% of all 18 year olds have not graduated from high school. Although different sources present different figures, this rate has remained fairly stable over the last decade. The vast majority of youngsters who drop out do so after they have entered the ninth grade (Dearman and Plisko, 1979).

Consistent with evidence that dropping out is a widespread phenomenon, is the notion that there are multiple causes. There are a variety of reasons why American youth drop out of high school. These reasons often are interrrelated, and there is considerable overlap. Nevertheless, it is possible to consider them in three major categories: school-related reasons, family-related reasons, and economically-related reasons.

The most common reason for leaving high school is poor academic performance, primarily grades. Students who are one or more years below

grade level in performance or those who have failed one or more grades are more likely to dropout out than other students. In addition to poor grades and academic performance, expulsion and suspension are indicators of school problems that lead to failure to complete high school. It is not surprising that students who are not doing well in school should seek to leave an environment providing negative feedback.

Family concerns comprise a second set of factors associated with failure to complete high school. Conditions in the student's family of origin as well as those in the student's family of procreation lead to an increased likelihood of dropping out. In the first category, students from broken homes are twice as likely to drop out of school as are students who are living with both parents. In the second category, eight out of ten teenage mothers under the age of 17 never finish high school. For these students keeping up with school becomes impossible.

Economic issues constitute a third category of factors leading students to drop out of school. A disadvantaged family background increases the probability of dropping out, and many students report leaving school to go to work. Teenage employment is both more widespread and more intensive than typically realized. Twenty-five percent of all 14-year olds and over 50% of all 17-year olds were employed at least part time in 1979 (Michael and Tuma, 1983). Among high school seniors those who worked averaged 15 to 18 hours of work per week, and very intensive work involvement is associated with higher rates of dropping out for at least some groups of youth (D'Amico, 1984). Many high school students face serious economic pressures which lead them to drop out of school before graduation.

The Current School Reform Movement: The Commissions and their Omissions

In examining the current movement for school reform and its implications for potential dropouts we must consider both the national commission reports that generated the latest wave of school reform and the responses of policy makers to the recommendations made in these reports. Both almost totally ignore the dropout problem in considering ways to improve U.S. education. Critics of the commission reports have noted the lack of attention devoted to the dropout problem (Howe, 1984; Stedman and Smith, 1983). Moreover, some critics have argued that the near total neglect of the dropout problem together with recommendations for school reform that are likely to enhance the dropout problem may be a blueprint for failure in the nation's schools (Edson, 1983).

The recommendations of the various commissions to raise the standards for students in U.S. schools fall into three broad areas: those involving course content, those involving use of time, and those involving student achievement directly. These three quite different types of standards may present different problems for potential dropouts.

Several reports call for changes in the content of courses that would result in higher standards. The National Commission on Excellence (1983) advocates five new basics: four years of English, three years each of mathematics, science, and social studies, and one-half year of computer science. The Commission's proposal would represent a more demanding curriculum for the many students who do not now take this type of course sequence. Other reports have advocated more courses in science and math (National Science Board Commission, 1983) or the elimination of the soft, non-essential courses (Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983), but the general message is the same: students should be pursuing more demanding sequences of basic courses.

If these recommendations are implemented, students will have fewer choices in selecting courses, and the school curriculum will have a more restricted range of course offerings. This appears to be exactly what is happening as states respond to the commission reports. While not often adopting the precise commission recommendations at least forty states have increased the number of academic courses required for high school graduation (Fiske, 1984).

A second area in which a number of commission reports have advocated higher standards is in the use of time for instruction and learning. The National Commission on Excellence (1983) and the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (1983) recommend that more time be spent in school through the requirement of longer school days and longer school years. They are joined in this recommendation by the National Science Board Commission (1983) which, in addition to longer school days and school years, suggests a longer school week to accomodate the greater time necessary for increased instruction in science and mathematics.

Proposed standards for increased time take a number of forms. Both the National Commission on Excellence (1983) and the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth argue that there should be increased homework requirements and increased attention to attendance requirements. They are joined by Goodlad (1983) in stressing that better use should be made of in-school time.

The response at the state level to the call for greater time for learning has typically concerned increasing in-school time. Twenty-three states have taken steps to increase the time students spend learning (Fiske, 1984). Local districts have moved to establish or increase homework requirements. For example, Oklahoma City's new homework policy

requires 30 minutes of homework each night for elementary students and 2 hours each night for high school students (U.S. Department of Education, 1984).

A third area in which one or more commission reports has called for higher standards is student achievement. Recommendations in this area have called for the end to the use of grades solely to indicate achievement, not as motivational devices reflective of student effort (National Commission on Excellence, 1985; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983). A second form of achievement standard calls for the end of social promotion and the use of rigorous grade promotion policies by which students will be promoted only when it is academically justified (National Commission on Excellence, 1983; National Science Board Commission, 1983; Task Force on Education for Economic Growth, 1983). Finally, several reports have recommended the use of standardized tests to monitor student achievement at specified intervals. Boyer (1983) argues for the use of a test of language proficiency prior to high school admission with remediation of any deficiencies during the summer. The National Commission on Excellence (1983) recommends the use of achievement tests at major transition points, particularly in the move from high school to college. The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth (1983) recommends periodic testing of achievement and skills.

State level activity in this area actually pre-dated the recent commission reports. In the late 1970's states started requiring testing of students to insure that they have achieved certain levels of achievement. By 1984 twenty-nine states had established some type of state testing program, and thirteen additional states had such programs under consideration (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). While the standards set by many states may appear low, these tests represent yet another hurdle

for students hoping to graduate from high school.

Taken together the calls for higher standards in curriculum content, learning time, and achievement levels seem to be based on five assumptions. An initial assumption, of course, is that current standards are too low. The standards involving curricular content and learning time, require a change in the processes experienced by students in school. More demanding content and more student time on school tasks are assumed to require greater student effort which, in turn, will lead to higher levels of achievement. Thus, a second assumption is that more demanding content and more time allocated to school will lead to greater individual student effort. The higher achievement levels demanded of students are set with the assumption that all or most students will be able to meet them, and thus excellence will be achieved. A third assumption is that greater student effort will lead to improved achievement. Since the commission recommendations are to be applied across the board, a fourth assumption is that the relationships between standards and effort and between effort and achievement will hold for all students. Finally, there is a fifth implicit assumption that no negative consequences will be associated with the more demanding standards. These assumptions, like the specific commission recommendations based upon them, fail to consider the impact on our population at risk, potential dropouts. In the next section, we examine the likely consequences, both positive and negative, of these new standards for these students.

Higher Standards and Potential Dropouts

The positive effect of raising standards for students in American schools can derive only from the greater effort and attention that students might devote to school work in order to achieve at levels higher than those

previously demanded. A key question for those concerned with the dropout problem is the relationship between the demands placed upon potential dropouts and the effort these students will devote to school tasks. Can we expect these students to respond to the higher standards by putting forth more effort? More specifically, will the reform recommendations and policies for a more standard curriculum, additional time on school work, and higher achievement standards result in greater student effort and higher student achievement?

The new curriculum requirements for high school graduation may have positive effects on students in general, but negative effects on potential dropouts. In an analysis of data from the Educational Testing Services's Study of Academic Prediction and Growth, Alexander and Pallas (1984) showed that although the overall advantages of increasing core requirements in the "New Basics" are clear, these core requirements seem to have little effect on the performance of students with relatively low grade point averages, the very students most likely to drop out of school. In fact, they conclude that the lowest performing youngsters are apparently a little bit better off outside the core.

Not only may the substance of the new core curriculum requirements do little to help the performance of potential dropouts, but the resulting form of the curriculum, a single pattern of courses taken by most students, may also have negative effects. The courses most often included in the core curriculum are academic courses, all of which tap ability along a narrow range. Implementation of the new curriculum requirements will restrict the variation in school experiences for students, limit the number of dimensions of ability deemed legitimate within the school, and curtail student choice in constructing a program of study. Potential dropouts, typically students with limited ability along this one dimension, may have

to face repeated failure more consistently with little opportunity to engage in other activities in school that might afford them some sense of success. A major result of the adoption of the "New Basics" could be the clarification of the distribution of ability in these basics, leaving some students only the choice of dealing with constant failure or dropping out of school.

Increasing the time students spend on school tasks does seem to have positive effects on learning even for students likely to be potential dropouts. For example, Keith (1982) in an analysis of data from the High School and Beyond Study, found that low ability students who do 1 to 3 hours of homework per week achieve grades commensurate with those of students of average ability who do no homework. The problem is not that increased time on school tasks is ineffective; rather, the problem is actually getting students to spend additional time on school tasks. Longer school days and longer school years may not result in greater time on school tasks as these increases in school time may require additional breaks, and teachers and students may encounter problems with fatigue. An additional 30 minutes at the end of the school day or an additional week at the end of the school year may add little to real learning time. Moreover, while additional time demands may not present problems for most students, such demands may be particularly problematic for potential dropouts. Potential dropouts are more likely than other students to have assumed adult responsibilities related to families and jobs. Youngsters who are working to help support their families are unlikely to curtail work time to devote more time to in-school activities or homework. Furthermore, increasing demands for time for school work and homework may prevent students for participating in extracurricular activities, thus denying them

access to activities that build a normative attachment to the school and provide avenues of success for students who do not perform well in the classroom. Increasing the time demands on potential dropouts may present them with a severe conflict that may be most easily resolved by leaving school.

The impact of higher achievement standards on potential dropouts is mixed. A series of studies reported by Natriello and Dornbusch (1984) suggest that raising standards that are currently very low might encourage greater student involvement and participation. They found that students in classrooms where standards were very low were more likely to cut class than students in classrooms where standards were more demanding. Moreover, they found that a higher demand level in the classroom was associated with greater effort by students even when the ability level of the students was controlled. Further, it was in the low-demand classrooms where the highest proportion of students reported that they felt the teacher should make them work harder. However, this study also showed that high-demand classrooms can often lose low ability students; low demand students try less hard when the pace is too fast. Higher achievement standards are likely to present additional problems to potential dropouts particularly when standards are raised without providing low achieving students with additional help. Of course, an additional constraint in providing such help is the limited amount of time potential dropouts have to commit to school work, including remediation.

These dual effects of raising achievement standards appear in the limited information we currently have on the impact of minimal competency testing. While systematic evaluative studies on the impact of minimal competency testing are currently unavailable, it is clear that the failure rates on such tests are much higher for economically disadvantaged students

and those from minority racial/ethnic backgrounds, two sociodemographic groups with high dropout rates (Jaeger, 1982). If academic standards are raised and students are not provided substantial additional help to attain them (within the limited time they can devote to school tasks), it seems plausible to expect that socially and academically disadvantaged students will be more likely to experience frustration and failure, resulting in notable increases in droping out.

Uncommon Sense: Implications for School Administrators

Our analysis suggests that the implementation of the reform recommendations from the recent wave of national commissions, while perhaps improving educational conditions for many U.S. students, may pose an increased risk for potential dropouts. Given the neglect of the dropout problem at the national level and the slight attention devoted to it in state level implementations of the reforms, this is not surprising. However, if we are to avoid some of the serious negative effects of the current reforms for potential dropouts, discussions of the problem that have been uncommon at the national and state levels must become common at the district and building levels. It is there that the dropout problem cannot be ignored. Accordingly, we offer the following suggestions to school administrators concerned with mitigating the negative effects of the current reforms on at risk students. These suggestions are straightforward and sensible in view of our analysis of the conflict between the real-life situations of potential dropouts and the reforms currently being implemented across the nation.

1. Re-Double Efforts to Monitor Dropouts at the District and Building Level

It is difficult and time consuming to collect good information on students who leave high school prior to graduation. These students often

disappear without formal warning, becoming invisible problems. However, to fully understand the dimensions and patterns of their particular dropout problem, school administrators must devote increased attention to collecting good information on students who dropout. This information can be used to good effect in at least three ways. First, internal variations in the pattern of dropouts within schools and districts can alert administrators to potential policies to encourage students to complete their high school education. Second, information on dropout rates over time can allow administrators to begin to understand the impact of the changes such as those currently being implemented as part of the current wave of reforms. Third, good data on the magnitude of the dropout problem can be used by school administrators to bring the dropout problem to the attention of state and national policy makers.

2. Insist Upon Adequate Evaluation of the New Reform Policies

While many states are moving ahead with new requirements and higher standards that impose greater accountability on students and educators, there are few if any attempts to account for the actual effects of the new policies. Careful program evaluation is expensive, yet it is essential to judging the efficacy of changing standards for performance. While individual districts and schools can monitor the impact of new policies on their students, only state level evaluation efforts can examine the impact of uniform policies across districts within a state and only national evaluation efforts can examine the impact of diverse state policies on schools and districts in various states. If school administrators are willing to be held accountable for the performance of their their schools, they should hold governors, legislators, and national commissions accountable for the effectiveness of their reform policies. The state of present knowledge on the impact of higher standards

suggests that much experimentation and evaluation is in order. Despite the tone of the recent commission reports and the quick action by various states, it is not clear how to raise standards for uniformly good effect.

3. Insist that Effects on Potential Dropouts Be Considered in Any Assessments of the Reforms

As we have noted from the outset, the dropout problem has been neglected from the outset in devising the new generation of school reforms. There is little reason to expect the dropout issue to command much attention as the new policies are implemented and assessed. If the assessment of the current wave of reforms is anything like the assessment of past efforts, we might expect a great deal of attention to be focused on various outcome measures. While a great many factors can influence such measures quite apart from the policy reforms themselves, one in particular might be predicted. We might expect that once the more challenging standards are in place aggregate measures of students performance will rise. Indeed, both the secretary of education and the president of the United States have cited the two year rise in SAT scores as a result of the work of the reform commissions, even though the students whose scores are cited completed their education prior to the implementation of the new reforms. Policy-makers in general will be tempted to credit their reform efforts for the improvement.

However, our analysis of the likely impact of the reforms on potential dropouts suggests that any improvement in aggregate outcome measures might just as likely be credited to the greater selectivity of schools as more students decide to leave prior to graduation and take with them their low outcome scores. To assess the real impact of the reforms in terms of aggregate outcome measures would require the use of what we refer to as a

"full enrollment approach" in calculating such measures as opposed to "survivor approach" as is typically done at present. The survivor approach includes final outcome scores only for those students who remain enrolled through the twelfth grade or whenever outcome measures are collected. Under a full enrollment approach aggregate performance measures would include scores for students who have dropped out of school prior to graduation. Scores for dropouts might be estimated on the basis of their earlier test scores and background characteristics. In any case, the likely effect of such an approach would be to reduce the aggregate scores by making them relective of outcomes for both these students who graduate and those who dropout. This would prevent policy makers from deeming as more successful those reforms which simply rid the schools of students with performance problems.

4. Continue to Serve Potential Dropouts with Special Programs that Have Proven Successful in the Past

Certain types of program options have appeared to be successful in minimizing dropouts in the past. School administrators should be careful to retain such approaches even in the face of the new reforms. While there has been relatively little systematic evaluation of many of these programs, certain features of such programs appear to work well with potential droputs. These include: 1) programs or schools that offer relatively small and more responsive environments for students, 2) individualized curricula and instructional approaches that tailor course content and mode and pace of instruction to the aptitude and interests of students, and 3) programs which offer learning climates characterized by clear and fair rules, reward systems reflective of individual student effort and progress, and a normative emphasis on academic excellence.

5. Provide Educational Services with Flexible Time Options

Our analysis suggests that potential dropouts are subject to severe time constraints. Requiring higher standards of performance presents them with a serious conflict since they cannot devote the additional time necessary to perform at the higher levels. Since the economic and family demands placed upon such students typically cannot be alleviated, it is up to school administrators to modify the time demands placed upon them by the educational system. Administrators should experiment with educational programs that are less concentrated and of longer duration. It may be reasonable for many potential dropouts to achieve higher standards by planning to participate in high school for an additional year and thereby reduce their course load. It would be important to remove the stigma of failure from such an option; planning to remain in high school part time for an additional year should have a different meaning from being retained in a grade and repeating a full course load. College administrators have grown accustomed to students who stretch out their undergraduate careers without any sense of failure, and high school administrators should be encouraged to do the same. Only in this way will many potential dropouts escape the severe time conflicts which prevent them from doing well initially, and from benefiting from remedial services when necessary.

We have listed a full and heavy agenda of responsibilities for district level and building level administrators. They may be able to enlist help from parents, the local community, and state and national policy makers. But recent experience suggests that it is local educational leaders who will have to keep the dropout problem in the public eye.

References

Boyer, E.L. High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1983.

D'Amico, R. Does employment during high school impair economic progress? Sociology of Education, 1984, 57, 152-164.

Dearman, N.B. and Plisko, V.W. The Condition of Education, 1979 Edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979.

Edson, C.H. Risking the nation: historical dimensions on survival and educational reform. Issues in Education, 1983, 1, 171-184.

Fiske, Concern over schools spurs extensive efforts at reform. The New York Times, September 9, 1984, 1, 68.

Goodlad, J.I. A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983.

Howe, H. Giving equity a change in the excellence game. Martin Buskin Memorial Lecture. Washington, D.C.: Education Writers Association, 1984.

Jaeger, R. M. The final hurdle: minimum competency achievement testing. Pp. 223-246 in G.R. Austin and H. Garber (eds.). The Rise and Fall of National Test Scores. New York: Academic Press, 1982.

Keith, T.Z. Time spent on homework and high school grades: a large-sample path analysis. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1982, 74, 248-253.

Levin, H. The costs to the nation of inadequate education. Report to the Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity, United States Senate. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Michael, R. and Tuma, N.B. Youth employment: does life begin at 16? Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America, Pittsburgh, PA, 1983.

National Commission on Excellence. A nation at risk: the imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983.

National Science Board Commission on Precollege Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology. Educating Americans for the 21st Century. Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation, 1983.

Natriello, G. and Dornbusch, S.M. Teacher Evaluative Standards and Student Effort. New York: Longman, 1984.

Neill, S.B. Keeping students in school: problems and solutions. AASA Critical Issues Report. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1979.

Stedman, L.C. and Smith, M.S. Recent reform proposals for american education. Contemporary Education Review, 1983, 2, 85-104.

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth. Action for excellence: a comprehensive plan to improve our nation's schools. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States, 1983.

U.S. Department of Education. The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984.